

Joseph and Sarah Nixon House I
1204 6th Avenue
Fourth Ward Neighborhood
Altoona
Blair County
Pennsylvania

HABS No. PA-5848

HABS
PA,
7-ALTO,
67-

PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

JOSEPH AND SARAH NIXON HOUSE I

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Location: 1204 6th Avenue

Date of Erection: 1872

Description: Of the houses surviving in the Fourth Ward survey area, those on 6th and 7th avenues have a more typically urban appearance than those on the avenues farther up the hill. The brick Nixon house is wide and low to the street, completely filling its allotted space. Unlike many of its Altoona counterparts, it is constructed of solid brick rather than brick veneer.

The three-bay, three-story house has a mansard roof on its front and rear facades with two windows in the third-floor front. The entrance is at the right of the front facade, and a square, two-story bay projects from the right side wall. Windows have straight molded lintels and sills. The recessed front door is set behind a brick-work round arch in the house's front wall. A wood porch has been added to the left side. Still surviving in the side bay are elaborate, bowed, stained-glass windows.

History: This 50' x 120' lot was one of the earliest to leave Wright ownership. Henry Noel purchased it from Archibald and Jane Wright through John Wright as attorney in May 1855. Joseph and Sarah Nixon bought it, probably still unimproved, in March 1866 for \$400.

In 1870, Joseph Nixon, a foreman in the PRR hoiler shop, owned a frame house here; he is listed as living here in 1873. In 1882, tax records indicate the house was brick-cased, valued at \$950. Nixon was also taxed for a gold watch, a horse, and a carriage.

By 1896, Joseph Nixon, Jr., a hoiler inspector, was also listed in city directories at this address. Soon after, he built a house across the street at 1205 6th Ave. designed by Altoona architects Michael and Louis Beezer. Nixon, Sr., died in 1896; upon his wife's death in 1906, a daughter and grandson, Lettie N. Gamble and Joseph N. Gamble, inherited the property. Lettie's husband, William, lived here in 1907 and ran a grocery (William R. Gamble & Company) just a block away at 1231 7th Ave.

In November 1928 the property was sold to John and Naomi Johannadies. In 1930 he worked as a electrician. Although Joseph Gamble reassumed the deed with a mortgage in 1935, the Johannadies continued in residence; by 1939, she was working at Olmes Beauty Shoppe. In 1945, Mrs. Earl Olmes lived with the couple.

The house has since had a long succession of occupants. John E. and Helen I. Brooks purchased the property in June 1945 for \$3,700 but sold it the following year to Harold and Thelma Rellinger-Stafford for \$5,200. By 1947, Harold Rellinger and Howard R. Stafford lived here, both working as physicians at the same address. Later in 1947 the house was transferred to Cleo R. Karr, a widow. By 1948, Cleo Karr lived here with Margaret L. Karr who worked as ticket agent for Blue & White Lines Inc.

In 1951 Karr transferred the deed to D. B. Cunningham whom she married soon after. They lived here with various hoarders throughout the 1950s. Cleo Cunningham sold the house to its present owners in August 1970.

Sources: Maps: 1882, 1888. Deed books: T/258, 376/672, 425/485, 510/296, 522/364, 562/399, 648/201, 907/226. Will book H/404. City directories. Tax assessment records. Beezer catalogue, 1899.

Project Information: This report was part of a larger project to document the city of Altoona, Pennsylvania. The project was undertaken by the Historic American Buildings Survey/Historic American Engineering Record (HABS/HAER), Robert Kapsch, chief, at the request of America's Industrial Heritage Project (AIHP), Randy Cooley, director. Overviews of the history of the city (HABS No. PA-5784) and the fourth ward neighborhood (HABS No. PA-5786) provide context for these buildings as well as a comprehensive list of sources. See also

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additional HABS reports on buildings in the city and other neighborhoods.

This report was prepared by Susan Garfinkel in the summer of 1989 under the supervision of HABS senior historian Alison K. Hoagland and Kim E. Wallace, supervisory historian. Garfinkel's and other project historians' work was published as Railroad City: Four Historic Neighborhoods in Altoona, Pennsylvania (Washington, D.C.: HABS/HAER, National Park Service, 1990), edited by Kim E. Wallace, supervisory historian, and Sara Amy Leach, HABS historian.